

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 070393

EXDIS - MILITARY ADDRESSEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLL REPEAT SAIGON 4468 SENT ACTION SECSTATE, APRIL 8TH:

QUOTE S E C R E T SAIGON 4468

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - PARAS 6 AND 10.

DEPT PASS CINCPAC

FOR ACTING SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, EAID, VS

SUBJECT: HOUSE VOTE ON ARMS AID TO VIET-NAM

REF: STATE 069214

1. ALL THE ACTIONS OUTLINED PARAGRAPH 2 OF YOUR MESSAGE HAD ALREADY BEEN PUT IN MOTION PRIOR TO ITS RECEIPT. GENERAL MURRAY WAS IN CONFERENCE WITH GENERAL VIEN, CHAIRMAN JGS ON FRIDAY, WITH THE CHIEF OF STAFF SATURDAY, AND FURTHER CONFERENCES ARE SCHEDULED FOR TODAY. GENERAL MURRAY FOUND THEM CONCERNED BUT NOT OVERLY WORRIED FOR REASONS WHICH ARE DETAILED BELOW.

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2. SEVERAL WEEKS AGO I HAD CONCLUDED THAT OUR LINABILITY TO GET

OUT OF WASHINGTON ANY FIRM FIX ON WHAT HAD ACTUALLY BEEN OBLIGATED UNDER FY 74 VIET-NAM PROGRAM, WITH THE SOLE EXCEPTION OF THE NAVY, INDICATED THAT WE WOULD PROBABLY BE IN FOR SERIOUS TROUBLE WHETHER OR NOT THE SUPPLEMENTAL WAS APPROVED AS REQUESTED. (IT IS SOMETIMES OVERLOOKED THAT I HAVE HAD A GREAT DEAL OF EXPERIENCE WITH THESE PROGRAMS.) THREE MONTHS AFTER FINAL PASSAGE OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL, NEITHER THE DAO, CINCPAC, PACAF NOR USARPAC WERE ABLE TO GET A FIX ON HOW MUCH HAD ALREADY BEEN OBLIGATED AND HOW MUCH REMAINED AVAILABLE FOR THE VIET-NAM ARMY AND AIR PROGRAMS. AT THIS POINT ONE BECAME RATHER CERTAIN THAT THE VARIOUS DEFENSE COMPTROLLERS AND ISA HAD NOT YET THRASHED OUT HOW MUCH OF THE OVERALL VIET-NAM MASF COULD BE SAFELY DIVERTED TO OTHER URGENT PROGRAMS WITHIN THE SERVICES OR TO OTHER INTERNATIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF INTEREST TO ISA, HOW MUCH OF THE VEIETNAMESE PROGRAM REQUISITIONS PROPERLY CHARGEABLE TO FY 73 COULD BE QUIETLY SHIFTED TO FY 74 THEREBY RELEASING MONEY FOR OTHER SERVICE NEEDS; AND HOW MUCH COULD BE SAFELY TAGGED ON TO A SUPPLEMENTAL.

3. THIS IS A WELL-ESTABLISHED, ALMOST RITUALISTIC PROCESS, A NECESSARY PROCESS, AND THE NATIONAL INTERESTS ARE USUALLY WELL SERVED. FOR ME TO HAVE PERSONALLY INTERVENED AND REQUESTED A RAPID RESOLUTION MIGHT HAVE DONE MORE HARM THAN GOOD PRIOR TO FINAL ACTION ON THE SUPPLEMENTAL. I CHOSE TO DO NOTHING EXCEPT INDICATE SUPPORT FOR WHATEVER FIGURE DOD DECIDED TO PRESENT FOR THE SUPPLEMENTAL AND AWAIT THE END OF THE PROCESS.

4. NEVERTHELESS, SEVERAL WEEKS AGO I INFORMED BOTH PRESIDENT THEIU AND THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO ALSO SERVES CONCURRENTLY AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE, THAT WE WOULD HAVE SOME BOOKKEEPING PROBLEMS AS WE MOVED INTO THE FIRST FISCAL YEAR AFTER THE PARIS AGREEMENTS; THAT THESE NORMAL PROBLEMS WOULD BE SUBJECT TO FURTHER DISTORTIONS BECAUSE OF DRASTIC DRAWDOWNS IN OVERALL SERVICE SUPPLIES TO MEET THE URGENT NEEDS OF ISRAEL WHICH HAD NOT BEEN ANTICIPATED; THAT IT WOULD TAKE A BIT OF TIME TO GET ALL THIS SORTED OUT AND, THEREFORE, ALTHOUGH I HOPED THE SUPPLEMENTAL WOULD PROVIDE SOME RELIEF, PRUDENCE AND SIMPLE COMMON SENSE DEMANDED THE MOST CAREFUL PREPARATION FOR THE VERY LEAN PERIOD WE MIGHT EXPECT IN THE APRIL-JUNE 30 QUARTER.

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5. THE PRESIDENT AGREED BUT REQUESTED THAT UNTIL WE HAD PRECISE INFORMATION ON AVAILABILITIES FOR THE BALANCE OF THE FISCAL YEAR WE NOT OFFICIALLY APPROACH THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF. HE SAID HE HAD MANY REASONS. AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT WERE THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO RISK THE PROBLEMS OF LOWERED MORALE WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES THAT MIGHT OCCUR IF IT BEGAN TO BE FELT THAT THE U.S. WAS ON THE VERGE OF ABANDONING THE GVN. HE SAID HE KNEW THIS WAS NOT TRUE BUT THAT HANOI WAS FETAURING THIS HEAVILY IN THE PROPAGANDA

AIMED PARTICULARLY AT THE ARMED FORCES. HE WAS AFRAID THAT SUCH NOTIFICATION MIGHT MAKE SUCH PROPAGANDA MORE CREDIBLE AND THEREBY DAMAGE THE INCREASING MORALE OF THE RVNAF AS THEY WERE NOW NOT ONLY CONTAINING THE INCREASING PRESSURE OF HANOI FORCES BUT BEGINNING TO PUNISH THEM SO SEVERELY HE THOUGHT HANOI MIGHT SOON CONFIRM A DECISION, WHICH HE THOUGHT ALREADY TENTATIVELY MADE, NOT TO OPT FOR A MAJOR FORCE OFFENSIVE THIS YEAR. UNTIL SUCH A DECISION WAS CLEARLY EVIDENT, ANY INDICATION THAT OUR SUPPORT MIGHT BE DIMINISHING MIGHT TILT THE BALANCE THE OTHER WAY. WHILE PENETRATIONS BY HANOI INTO THE RVNAF STRUCTURE HAD BEEN PROGRESSIVELY REDUCED, THE DANGER WAS STILL PRESENT.

6. THE LAST PRINCIPAL REASON WAS HIS DESIRE TO HAVE IT APPEAR THAT THE BELT-TIGHTENING WAS A VIETNAMESE DECISION AND NOT ONE FORCED BY THE AMERICANS. MORALE WOULD BE IMPROVED, AND ANY POSSIBLE ANTI-AMERICAN RESENTMENT WOULD BE GREATLY MINIMIZED. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD HAVE TEMS TOUR ALL THE COMMANDS CARRYING THE MESSAGE THAT THE RVNAF COULD NOT FOREVER BE DEPENDENT ON THEIR GENEROUS AMERICAN FRIENDS FOR SUPPLY, THAT IT WAS JUST NOT POSSIBLE FOR THE RVNAF TO EXPEND THEIR RESOURCES WITH THE SAME LIBERALITY AS THE AMERICAN FORCES HAD DONE, AND THE TIME TO BEGIN THE MOST FRUGAL HUSBANDING OF RESOURCES WAS NOW. (SUBSEQUENT TRIPS OF SUCH TEAMS HAVE BEEN FULLY COVERED IN BOTH DIA AND CIA REPORTING, INCLUDING THE BRIEFING OF COST FIGURES FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF ARTILLERY ROUNDS WITH STRICT INSTRUCTIONS TO USE ONLY THE LEAST COSTLY ROUND SUITABLE TO THE TACTICAL SITUATION.)

7. THE PRESIDENT THEN SAID WITH A GRIN THAT WHEN THE RVNAF REQUISITIONS, MADE THROUGH THEIR COMPUTER SYSTEM TIED DIRECTLY WITH THE AMERICAN LOGISTIC COMPUTER SYSTEM, BEGAN TO BE AUTOMATICALLY REJECTED WITHOUT EXPLANATION, THEY ALREADY KNEW
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THEY WERE IN TROUBLE. HOWEVER, HE DEEPLY APPRECIATED MY CANDOR AND FRANKNESS IN INFORMING HIM SO QUICKLY AND COMPLETELY. HE SAID HE HAS HEARD FROM HIS MILITARY FRIENDS IN THAILAND OF THE COMPLETE TRUST THEY HAD DEVELOPED IN MY HONESTY IN THE FOUR YEARS I HAD BEEN THERE, AND THAT MY WORDS, WHILE THEY DID NOT ALWAYS BRING GOOD NEWS, COULD ALWAYS BE DEPENDED UPON TO BE TRUE. HE ASKED WHETHER I COULD KEEP THIS CONVERSATION ONLY BETWEEN THE TWO OF US FOR THE TIME BEING SINCE WASHINGTON AND SAIGON WERE BOTH VERY LEAKY PLACES. I SAID THAT I COULD AND THAT I WOULD.

8. NEITHER GENERAL MURRAY NOR WASHINGTON HAS, UNTIL NOW, BEEN INFORMED OF THIS BACKGROUND FOR WHAT MAY HAVE APPEARED AN ARBITRARY AND CAPRICIOUS DELAY IN GIVING GENERAL MURRAY PERMISSION TO BEGIN DETAILED CONVERSATIONS WITH THE RVNAF.

IT WAS THEN MY JUDGMENT, CONFIRMED BY THE SUBSEQUENT ARVN SUCCESSES, THAT THE DELAY MIGHT PROVE USEFUL. CERTAINLY THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF HAVING THE VIETNAMESE START THE PROCESS OF SEVERELY CUTTING BACK ON THEIR OWN HAS WORKED OUT WELL, JUDGIN BY GENERAL MURRAY'S REPORTS TO ME OF THE COMPLETELY COOPERATIVE AND UNDERSTANDING REACTION OF THE JGS. IN ANY EVENT, I HAVE ALWAYS HAD A GREAT AVERSION TO HAVING AMERICANS LOOK SILLY, AND ONLY NOW ARE WE BEGINNING TO GET A FAIRLY COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF THE ACTUAL STATE OF THE WASHINGTON BOOKKEEPING, ON THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE PROGRAMS WITHOUT WHICH ANY ATTEMPT AT DETAILED CONVERSATIONS WOULD HAVE BEEN MEANINGLESS. THE SINGLE EXCEPTION WAS THE NAVY PROGRAM WHERE PRECISE ARRANGEMENTS HAVE PERMITTED GENERAL MURRAY TO HAVE PRECISE FUNDING CONTROL OVER THE NAVY PROGRAM. IN THIS PROGRAM WE HAVE KNOWN EXACTLY WHERE WE STAND. AS A RESULT THERE ARE NOT ONLY NO SHORTAGES BUT INSTEAD A SMALL BUT ADEQUATE SURPLUS AS WE ENTER THE LAST QUARTER.

9. THIS LEADS TO THE OBSERVATION THAT WE HAVE IN THE DAO, USSAG, CINCPAC AND ITS COMPONENT COMMANDS SOME OF THE ABLEST MILITARY OFFICERS TO BE FOUND ANYWHERE. YET, IF THEY WERE, IN FACT, TWICE AS ABLE THEY STILL WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN COMPETENT TO MANAGE THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE VIET-NAM PROGRAMS ON THE BASIS OF THE SCANTY, INCOMPLETE AND OFTEN CONFLICTING INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM WASHINGTON TO ALL THE COMMANDS IN THE PACIFIC. FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHARGE TO THE ALREADY INADEQUATE FY 74 PROGRAM OF \$267 MILLION
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AMMUNITION DRAWDOWN IN CY 72 BECAME KNOWN IN THE PACIFIC ONLY DURING THE SUPPLEMENTAL HEARINGS.

10. MY REMARKS DO NOT IMPLY THE SLIGHTEST CRITICISM OF THE LOGISTICIANS BOTH IN WASHINGTON AND CINCPAC FOR WHOSE SINCERE AND DEDICATED HELP ALL OF US HERE ARE EXTREMELY GRATEFUL. NOR DO I INTEND TO CRITICIZE THE COMPTROLLERS, FOR I DO INDEED UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE SYSTEM AND BELIEVE THAT THE NATION HAS PROFITED FROM ITS FLEXIBILITY. I ALSO UNDERSTAND THE TEMPTATION TO CONSTANTLY NIBBLE AT THE LARGEST REMAINING MASF FUNDED AID PROGRAM TO ALLEVIATE OTHER PROBLEMS IN OTHER AREAS. BUT THIS TEMPTATION MUST BE CURBED IN THE FUTURE IF THE OVERRIDING NATIONAL PRIORITY WHICH VIET-NAM REPRESENTS IS TO BE PROPERLY SERVED.

11. IT ALSO SEEMS TO ME THAT THE EXCELLENT STATE OF THE NAVY PROGRAM HERE AND THE OBVIOUSLY PRUDENT AND EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT IT HAS HAD FROM THE DAO CLEARLY SUGGESTS THAT THE SAME ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE PROGRAMS BY THE DAO, UNDER THE ABLE AND STRICT SUPERVISION OF CINCPA
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